

Connect SoCal Sustainable Communities Program Call for Applications: Civic Engagement, Equity, and Environmental Justice Program Guidelines

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Sustainable Communities Program (SCP) Overview

Since 2005, SCAG’s various sustainability planning grant programs (Compass Blueprint, Sustainability Planning Grants, Sustainable Communities Program) have provided resources and direct technical assistance to jurisdictions to complete important local planning efforts to enable implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS), which today is called [Connect SoCal](#).

The SCP allows SCAG to strengthen partnerships with local agencies who are responsible for land use and transportation decisions. The SCP provides local jurisdictions with multiple opportunities to seek funding and resources to meet the needs of their communities, address recovery and resiliency strategies considering COVID-19, and support regional goals. To strengthen the implementation link between this Call for Applications and the adopted Connect SoCal, the name of the program has changed to Connect SoCal SCP Call 4: Civic Engagement, Equity, and Environmental Justice (CEEJ).

Connect SoCal SCP Call 4: Civic Engagement, Equity and Environmental Justice (CEEJ) Overview

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) announces the Connect SoCal SCP Call for Applications focused on Civic Engagement, Equity, and Environmental Justice.

On July 2, 2020, the SCAG Regional Council adopted [Resolution 20-623-2](#), affirming its commitment to advancing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout Southern California and subsequently adopted the Racial Equity Early Action Plan in May 2021 to guide SCAG's work in advancing equity. SCAG is committed to work in partnership with others to close the gap of racial injustice and better serve historically disinvested communities. The SCP aims to prioritize resources where there is a demonstrated need, guided by the Connect SoCal Goal, "to support healthy and equitable communities." For more information on SCAG's equity efforts, please review the [Racial Equity Early Action Plan](#).

SCP CEEJ has the following goals and objectives:

SCP CEEJ Program Goals

- Advance the goals in SCAG's Racial Equity Early Action Plan, by prioritizing efforts that directly benefit **Communities of Concern, SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities (DACs)**, and other Priority Populations by encouraging racial equity in local planning practices.
- Support a **wide range of eligible** land use and transportation planning activities including housing supportive infrastructure planning efforts.
- Support the development of plans to close the **racial equity gap**.
- Align with Funding Objectives including infill development, housing for all incomes, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction, Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH), RTP/SCS implementation, and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction.
- Support and encourage equitable partnerships between community-based organizations (CBOs) and local governments.

SCP CEEJ Program Objectives

- Support local planning efforts, strategically invest in, and provide technical assistance for projects and programs in SCAG's Communities of Concern, SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities (DACs), and other Priority Populations.
- Support local planning efforts focused on eliminating barriers to civic engagement for communities that have experienced historic disinvestment.
- Build community capacity, trust, and sustainable relationships with stakeholders in communities of color, including Communities of Concern, DACs, and other Priority Populations to strategically invest in local community-centered initiatives.
- Prioritize community identified and implemented projects.

Program Funding

CEEJ is funded by a combination of sources including Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) and the State of California (State) Regional Early Action Planning Grant Program (REAP 2.0.). CEEJ anticipates a budget of approximately \$5 million, pending approval.

REAP 2.0 funds Transformative Planning and Implementation Activities that meet housing and equity goals, reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and advance implementation of the region's Sustainable

Communities Strategy (SCS). REAP 2.0 is explicitly intended to meet multiple objectives – Infill development, Housing for all incomes, Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) reduction, and Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) in ways that accelerate the implementation of regional and local plans to achieve these goals. Definitions for all terms are found in Appendix 1: Definition of Terms.

SB 1 supports the implementation of the RTP/SCS and supports greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions. Proposed projects must have a transportation nexus and are expected to directly benefit the multi-modal transportation system. Additionally, proposed projects shall support and advance the following objectives: sustainability, accessibility, safety, preservation, innovation, economic vitality, public health, and social equity, and provide other important community benefits. Projects shall also include an integrated approach to land use and transportation planning, and further a coordinated approach to planning. Given the inclusion of SB 1 funds, any city and county who receives SB 1 funds is required to have a housing element in substantial compliance with the State housing element law and must submit updated housing element Annual Progress Reports at the time of award notice.

Additional information on the program funding sources is provided in the Applicant Toolkit, which will be available on the program website once the Call is released.

Local Partnership Structure

This Call for Applications includes a co-applicant partnership structure, inclusive of a primary applicant and a co-applicant. Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and non-profits are eligible and highly encouraged to apply as co-applicants in partnership with an eligible primary applicant. To align with funding requirements, co-applicants must have a 501(c)3 status. A CBO that utilizes a fiscal sponsor is eligible to apply. The fiscal sponsor must apply on behalf of the organization, as the CEEJ program requires 501(c)3 status. Multiple co-applicants, up to two (2), may apply alongside an eligible primary applicant. Agencies eligible to serve as a primary applicant may apply as a co-applicant with another eligible primary applicant if appropriate.

Under a primary and co-applicant partnership, co-applicants may be compensated to lead key elements of the project. In addition, SCAG will procure a consultant to perform identified work on behalf of the primary applicant and co-applicant partnership. Further details on the co-applicant partnership are included in Appendix 2: Partnership Structure.

Applicant Eligibility

Eligibility Screening Survey (required for all applicants)

To ensure applicant and project eligibility, SCAG requires all applicants, both primary applicants and co-applicants, to complete the **Eligibility Screening Survey** prior to starting the application. The survey will indicate eligibility and provide information to SCAG to better evaluate the application. The survey will be available on the program website once the Call is released

Eligible primary applicants include local or regional agencies, county public health agencies, county transportation agencies, transit agencies or districts, and Tribal entities. For projects located in infill areas, housing authorities, natural resource or public land agencies, public academic institutions, regional housing trust funds, school districts, and special districts are also eligible to apply as primary applicants. CBOs and non-profits are eligible only as co-applicants.

Proposed projects not located in an infill area are still eligible for this Call due to the inclusion of SB1 funds.

Eligible as a Primary Applicant OR Co-Applicant (regardless of whether the project is in an infill area)	Eligible as a Co-Applicant Only	Eligible as a Primary Applicant ONLY if Proposed Project is located in an infill area*	Not Eligible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local or regional agencies, examples include cities, counties, councils of government, Regional Transportation Planning Agencies, and County Public Health Departments Transit agencies or districts Tribal entities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-Based Organization (CBO) Non-profit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Authority Natural resource or public land agency Public academic institution Regional housing trust funds School district Special district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultant Private Companies

* Definitions for all terms, including infill areas, are found in Appendix 1: Definition of Terms.

Self-Certification Checklist (for co-applicants only)

After completing the Eligibility Screening Survey, eligible co-applicants are also required to complete a **Self-Certification Checklist**, included as part of the application, which helps SCAG identify areas where co-applicants need additional support for eligibility requirements. SCAG staff are available to discuss project eligibility. Links will be available on the program website once the Call is released.

Project Design

Funding Objectives

Proposed projects must address at least one of the five following funding objectives:

- (1) Accelerating infill development that facilitates housing supply, choice, and affordability
- (2) Affirmatively furthering fair housing (AFFH) by means of taking meaningful actions, in addition to combating discrimination, that overcome patterns of segregation and foster inclusive communities free from barriers that restrict access to opportunity based on protected characteristics, when considering housing
- (3) Reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
- (4) Reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions
- (5) Support implementation of SCAG's adopted Connect SoCal

Applicants shall strive for innovative and impactful approaches that produce transformative, visible, and measurable projects and results. The program seeks activities that are demonstrably exemplary, and applicants can demonstrate the funds will lead to changes that support program goals and objectives, stated above (e.g., housing production, VMT reduction, AFFH, Advancing/Implementing the SCS). Definitions for all terms are found in Appendix 1: Definition of Terms.

Target Outcomes

In alignment with the funding objectives, applicants must demonstrate how the proposed project meets at least one of the following target outcomes:

- **Accelerating Infill Development that Facilitates Housing Supply, Choice, and Affordability:** Increased number of city codes and/or policies revised and/or adopted to increase infill development or investment.
- **Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH)**
 - o High-resource areas: Increased number of permit streamlining and/or incentive programs to increase housing affordability.
 - o Disadvantaged community areas: Increased number of anti-displacement strategies adopted and/or completed.
- **Reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT):** Increased number of multimodal plans completed and/or investments in multimodal transportation.

Note: SCAG's REAP 2.0 funding application is currently pending review and approval from the State. Target outcomes are subject to change. SCAG will work with applicants to modify target outcomes as needed.

Project Categories

Applicants may apply to one or more of the following CEEJ project categories: (1) Housing and Land Use Strategies, and (2) Multimodal Communities. Examples are included in the bulleted list, by category. A project or plan may qualify under more than one category. Proposed project budgets are anticipated to be a minimum of \$200,000 and up to \$500,000.

1. Housing & Land Use Strategies

Projects must have a direct tie leading to the production of affordable housing and reducing VMT. Eligible activities should result in a change in behavior or a significant improvement to the existing land use pattern or other dynamics that result in accelerating infill housing production and reducing VMT.

Applicants must describe how plans support accelerated infill development, and as applicable, support AFFH. Plans accelerating infill development near jobs and other key destinations to support increasing housing choices and affordability effectively reduces VMT and greenhouse gas emissions. Example plans and projects include:

- o Affordable Housing Plans & Ordinances
- o Integrating Infill Housing into General Plan Updates
- o Integration of Environmental Justice Goals and/or Policies into General Plan Updates in support of housing production and AFFH
- o Infrastructure & Utility Financing Plans (*not including fossil fuel and natural gas*)

2. Multimodal Communities

Multimodal Communities projects should increase accessibility, mobility, resiliency, and safety. Projects are eligible when they leverage transportation planning, policies, and investment strategies that increase travel options to homes, jobs, services, and other key destinations that provide, support, or enhance Multimodal Communities. These projects must reduce the number

or length of vehicle trips. Multimodal Communities are defined as those which are served by a variety of travel options that accommodate a variety of transportation modes for the public to access daily destinations. Multimodal options can include, but are not limited to, complete street improvements for active transportation, improving access to transit, and creating high quality transit stops.

Applicants must describe and demonstrate how the plan or project reduces VMT and GHG emissions. For example, in a park and greenway plan, this may include creating safe and accessible routes to parks and green spaces that reduce the number of vehicle trips and support multimodal communities. Additionally, for a Vision Zero Plan, this may include planned street improvements that make it safer to access housing, key destinations and job centers without a car, and educational engagement campaigns that promote safe walking and biking. Example plans and projects include:

- Community E-Bike Rebates and E-Bike Share Plans & Pilots (*e-bike pilots are eligible when done alongside planning activities*)
- Highways to Boulevards and Freeway Cap Plans – Improvements for Non-Motorized Vehicles and Pedestrian Traffic (*Motorized Vehicle Infrastructure improvements are ineligible*)
- Park and Greenway Connectivity Plans
- Multimodal Corridor Studies (*alongside planning activities*)
- Transportation Accessibility and Safety Demonstration Projects (*alongside planning activities*)
- Vision Zero Policy and Programs or Safety Plans

Community Engagement Strategies are a required component of all projects funded through CEEJ and should be integrated into the proposed project scope. Community engagement strategies may include but are not limited to the following examples:

- Cohort-Based Engagement Programs
- Community Charettes
- Community Storytelling
- Community Resiliency Playbooks & Toolkits
- [Go Human Kit of Parts Activations](#)

For additional guidance on community engagement best practices, please reference available resources on the program website. Links will be available on the program website once the Call is released.

Priority Populations

SCAG prioritizes funding in or providing direct benefit historically disadvantaged, underserved, underrepresented, and under resourced areas. CEEJ has identified “Priority Populations” which include the designations below. These designations allow SCAG to demonstrate how CEEJ has a significant geographic or region-wide benefit for Disadvantaged and Historically Underserved Communities. Priority Populations include:

- SB535 Disadvantaged Communities (CalEnviroScreen 4.0)
- SCAG Communities of Concern

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- TCAC/HCD Opportunity Areas (High segregation and poverty, low resource, and moderate resource communities; affordable housing production in high resource and highest resource communities will also be prioritized).
- AB 1550 Communities

Please refer to the REAP 2.0 Priority Population Mapping Tool, which will be available on the program website upon Call release, to identify if the proposed project overlaps with one or more Priority Population areas. Definitions for all terms are found in Appendix 1: Definition of Terms.

Evaluation Criteria

All project categories will be evaluated using the following scoring criterion:

- Project Design and Outcomes
- Project Need and Priority Population Benefits
- Inclusive and Equitable Engagement
- Local Partnerships

Further detail regarding how points are determined will be provided in the project application, available on the SCP project website.

Scoring Criteria		Points
General Project Information and Eligibility		Not scored
1	Project Design & Outcomes	29
1.1	Community and Vision Summary	
1.2	Funding Objectives	
1.3	Anticipated Project Outcomes	
1.4	Scope of Work & Project Feasibility	
1.5	Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) Implementation	
2	Project Need & Priority Population Benefits	20
2.2	Priority Populations	
2.3	Addressing Historic/Current Inequities & Priority Population Benefit	
3	Inclusive & Equitable Engagement	30
3.1	Priority Populations Engagement	
3.2	Inclusive, Diverse & Equitable Engagement	
4	Local Partnerships	21
4.1	Reciprocal Relationships and Impact	
4.2	Governance & Decision-making	
4.3	Letters of Support	
Total Points		100

Schedule

SCP Civic Engagement, Equity & Environmental Justice	Date
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SCP CEEEJ Program Guidelines

Call for Applications Opens	Early 2023
Application Workshops	January and February 2023
Call for Applications Submission Deadline	March 2, 2023, at 5:00 p.m.
Proposal Review and Scoring	March 2023 – April 2023
Distribution of Conditional Award Letters	May 2, 2023 (or within 60 days of applications deemed complete)
SCAG Policy Committee and Regional Council Approval of the SCP CEEEJ Rankings	June and July 2023
All Funds Must Be Committed (I.e., under purchase order/contract, etc.)	June 30, 2024
Final Work and Invoices Submitted	December 31, 2025

Contact Information

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Appendix 1: Definition of Terms

- **Infill Area:** “Infill”, the purposes of the REAP 2.0 Program, means areas where all the following apply: *(Note this is a working definition and is subject to change based on State approval)*.
 - the area consists of unused or underutilized lands
 - within existing development patterns
 - that is or will be accessible to destinations and daily services by transit, walking, or bicycling and located in either:
 - An urban center, urban corridor, or area with transit-supportive densities, or
 - An established community that meets all the following criteria:
 - The area consists or previously consisted of qualified urban uses
 - The area is predominantly surrounded (approximately 75 percent of the perimeter) by parcels that are developed or previously developed with qualified urban uses. In counting this, perimeters bordering navigable bodies of water and improved parks shall not be included, and
 - No parcel within or adjoining the area is classified as agricultural or natural and working lands.
 - Under unique circumstances, applicants may propose an alternative definition of “Infill” subject to approval by the Department and State Collaborative Partners.
- **Priority Populations:** This program prioritizes funding in areas that have been traditionally disadvantaged, underserved, underrepresented, and under resourced. These designations include:
 - **SB 535 Disadvantaged Areas** (as designated under CalEnviroScreen Version 4.0-- <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/1c21c53da8de48f1b946f3402fbae55c/page/SB-535-Disadvantaged-Communities/>) are based on geographic, socioeconomic, public health, and environmental hazard criteria, and may include, but are not limited to, either of the following:
 - Areas disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative public health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation
 - Areas with concentrations of people that are of low income, high unemployment, low levels of homeownership, high rent burden, sensitive populations, or low levels of educational attainment
 - Inclusive of Tribal Entities and Tribal Government Lands
 - **SCAG Communities of Concern:** Census Designated Places (CDP) and the City of Los Angeles Community Planning Areas (CPA) that fall in the upper one-third of all communities in the SCAG region for having the highest concentration of minority populations and low-income households
 - **TCAC/HCD Opportunity Areas:** High segregation and poverty, low resource, and moderate resource communities; High and highest resource areas that are located within infill areas shall focus on Affordable Housing production and Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing to be considered an eligible area
 - **AB1550 Communities** (See maps applications link below: <https://webmaps.arb.ca.gov/PriorityPopulations/>) include “Low-income households” with incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or with household

incomes at or below the threshold designated as low-income by the Department of Housing and Community Development's (HCD) State Income Limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093 (2) and "Low-income communities" are census tracts with median household incomes at or below 80 percent of the statewide median income or with median household incomes at or below the threshold designated as low-income by HCD's State Income Limits adopted pursuant to Section 50093

- **Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH):** Pursuant to Government Code section 899.50, AFFH means taking meaningful actions that, taken together, address significant disparities in housing needs and in access to opportunity, replacing segregated living patterns with truly integrated and balanced living patterns, transforming racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty into areas of opportunity, and fostering and maintaining compliance with civil rights and fair housing laws.
- **Co-Applicant:** Non-profits and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) with 501(c)3 status. Organizations with fiscal sponsors are eligible. Co-applicants must apply in partnership with primary applicants.
- **Primary Applicant (or Agency Applicant):** Local or regional agencies, including cities, counties, and councils of governments (COGs), transit agencies or districts, county transportation agencies, county public health agencies, and Tribal Entities. If the project is located in an infill area, Housing Authorities, Natural resource or public land agencies, Public academic institutions, School districts, Special districts, and regional housing trust funds are eligible as primary applicants.
- **Special District:** Limited purpose local governments entities, separate from cities and counties, providing focused public services such as fire protection, sewers, water supply, electricity, parks, recreation, etc.
- **Natural Resource or Public Resource Agencies:** Federal, State, or local agency responsible for natural resources or public land administration.

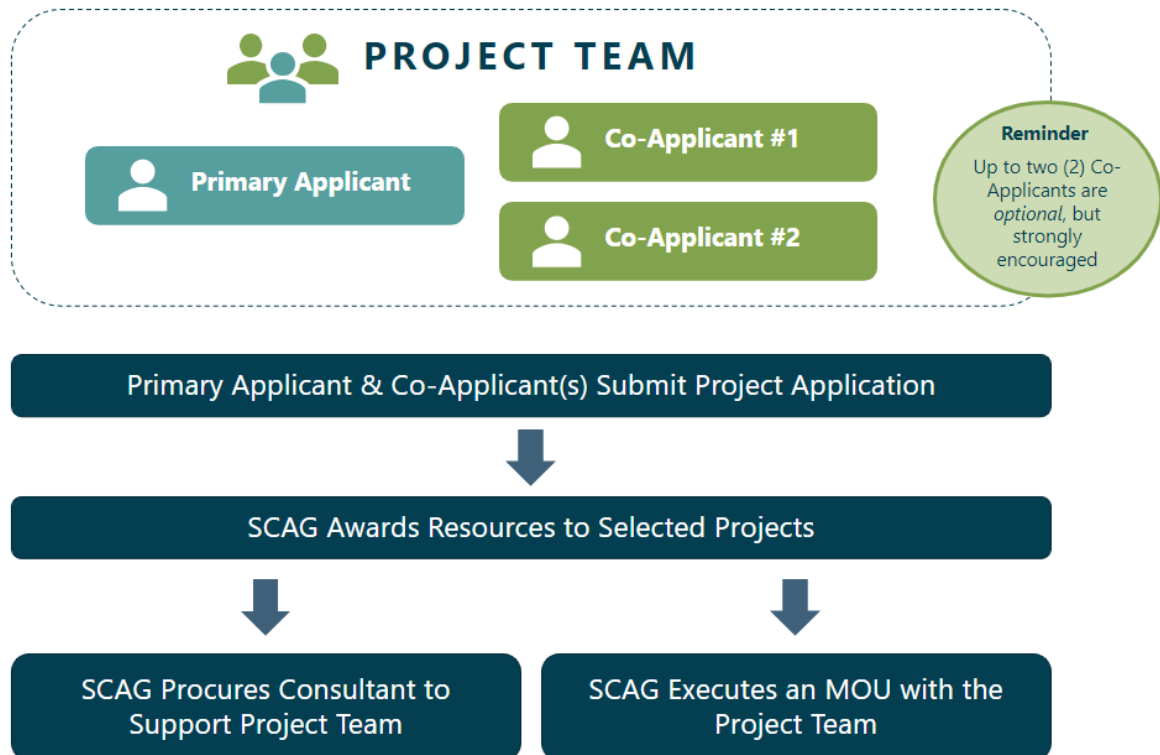
Appendix 2: Partnership Structure

This Call for Applications encourages co-applicant partnerships to support equity, local engagement, and collaboration. Upon award, co-applicants listed on the application will enter a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement with SCAG, the primary applicant, and the consultant to outline roles, responsibilities, the scope of work, and payment structure for each co-applicant. SCAG will also procure a consultant on behalf of the primary applicant to support the project and the co-applicant partnership.

Under a primary and co-applicant partnership, co-applicants would be compensated to lead key elements of the project. In addition, a consultant team would be procured to perform identified work on behalf of the primary and co-applicant partnership. A graphic visual of the co-applicant structure is included below.

SCAG may evaluate the risks to the program posed by each co-applicant to assess a co-applicant’s ability to manage award funds pursuant to the requirements prescribed in the applicable funding guidelines. In some circumstances, special grant conditions may be imposed to mitigate anticipated risks. Each co-applicant may be required to furnish documentation to SCAG for this evaluation. The proposed payment method is based on a milestone payment, subject to the approval of the State. SCAG will perform a cost analysis of the proposed budget and will pay the co-applicant based on a milestone payment schedule as outlined in the MOU agreement.

As part of the evaluation process, this program encourages equitable partnerships between local agencies and CBOs. Key elements of equitable partnerships should include reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships, balanced and clear roles and responsibilities, an equitable decision-making structure where each partner is closely involved in all decisions affecting the project, and power dynamics are recognized and addressed. The budget for the co-applicant(s) should reflect the roles and responsibilities described in the application and outlined in the scope of work. The partnership shall also seek to support long-term collaborative relationship building between partners and with the community.



Appendix 3: Applicant Eligibility

Community-Based Organization (CBO) or Nonprofit

	Infill Area
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		Yes, my proposed project is located in an infill area	No, my proposed project is not located in an infill area
Project Category	Housing and Land Use Strategies	Eligible as co-applicant only	Likely ineligible
	Multimodal Communities	Eligible as co-applicant only	Eligible as co-applicant only

County Public Health Agency, County Transportation Agency, Local or Regional Agency, Transit Agency or District, or Tribal Entity

		Infill Area	
		Yes, my proposed project is located in an infill area	No, my proposed project is not located in an infill area
Project Category	Housing and Land Use Strategies	Eligible as primary or co-applicant	Likely ineligible
	Multimodal Communities	Eligible as primary or co-applicant	Eligible as primary or co-applicant

Housing Authority, Natural Resource or Public Lands Agency, Public Academic Institution, School District, Special District

		Infill Area	
		Yes, my proposed project is located in an infill area	No, my proposed project is not located in an infill area
Project Category	Housing and Land Use Strategies	Eligible as primary or co-applicant	Likely ineligible
	Multimodal Communities	Eligible as primary or co-applicant	Eligible as co-applicant only

Local or Regional Housing Trust Fund

		Infill Area	
		Yes, my proposed project is located in an infill area	No, my proposed project is not located in an infill area
Project Category	Housing and Land Use Strategies	Eligible as primary or co-applicant	Likely ineligible
	Multimodal Communities	Eligible as primary or co-applicant	Likely ineligible